



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**BILL:** House Bill 424 – Public Health – Products Containing a Flame-Retardant Chemical

**SPONSOR:** Delegates Cullison, et al.

**HEARING DATE:** February 12, 2020

**COMMITTEE:** Health and Government Operations

**CONTACT:** Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

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**POSITION:** SUPPORT

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The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 424 – Public Health – Products Containing a Flame-Retardant Chemical**, which prohibits importing, selling, or offering for sale any juvenile product, mattress, upholstered furniture, or reupholstered furniture that contains more than 0.1% of a flame-retardant chemical<sup>1</sup> by mass.

Growing evidence suggests that flame-retardant chemicals are harmful to humans and animals. Exposure to these chemicals is associated with reduced immune function, reproductive toxicity, endocrine and thyroid disruption, cancer, impaired fetal and child development, and neurological problems. Children are especially vulnerable to these chemicals' effects due to increased hand-to-mouth behavior and cumulative exposure over the lifespan.<sup>2</sup>

The health risks of exposure to flame-retardant chemicals outweigh the potential fire safety benefits.<sup>3</sup> Most fire-related death and injury results not from flames directly, but from smoke inhalation.<sup>4</sup> When flame-retardant chemicals combust, the organohalogens released can increase the yield of toxic by-products, causing greater lung injury.<sup>5</sup> Alternative fire prevention and mitigation strategies are available

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, "any chemical for which the term 'flame retardant' appears on a safety data sheet developed in accordance with 29 C.F.R. 1901.1200(G); and (II) 1. Contains one or more halogen elements, including fluorine, chlorine, bromine, or iodine; 2. Contains one or more carbon elements and one or more phosphorus elements; 3. Contains one or more carbon elements and one or more phosphorous elements; or 4. Is a nanoscale chemical."

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/flame\\_retardants/index.cfm](https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/flame_retardants/index.cfm)

<sup>3</sup> Shaw, Susan. "Halogenated flame retardants: do the fire safety benefits justify the risks?." *Reviews on environmental health* 25.4 (2010): 261-306. DOI: [10.1515/reveh.2010.25.4.261](https://doi.org/10.1515/reveh.2010.25.4.261)

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

without the harmful effects associated with flame-retardant chemicals. Use of smoke detectors, sprinklers, fire-safe candles, and child-proof lighters improve fire safety without health hazard.<sup>6</sup>

State enforcement of this ban would not require specialized environmental health staff. If enforcement authority is delegated to local jurisdictions, the significant fiscal impact would require additional funding. As the fiscal and policy note indicates, the impact of enforcement at the state level is estimated to be minimal.<sup>7</sup>

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 424** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

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<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> [http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/fnotes/bil\\_0004/hb0424.pdf](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/fnotes/bil_0004/hb0424.pdf)